

**Report from Noel Parent on his tour of Village Action villages which World Dignity, Inc. provided support in 2006 and beyond. Date of Report, June, 2007**

Everyone,

"I just wanted to report back on my recent tour of the Village Action villages which World Dignity, Inc. is currently supporting. I met with Anbu, who has worked with Village Action for about 18 years with Bhavana, and she took myself and one other Aurovilian to two villages where the most recent WDI funds are being utilized.

"The first village was Kaluperumpakkam, which is a quite remote village, very poor, located in the midst of many trees, including a large banyan tree with many large bats hanging from it. The project in this community, as I understood it, was to build a community center for the village women's groups/clubs (also begun by Village Action) to meet and discuss the various social and economic issues of the community, and also have space for future workshops or other educational opportunities - financial, social, or otherwise. In this village, there are also some financial education projects going on, concerning credit and savings programs for the women. The government is also involved in this, which allows women to take land on lease in order to cultivate it and build a more expansive income source for their families.

"The villages are moving away from rice crops, which are high labor, high water need crops, and replacing them with cashew trees, which are used to build huts/homes, and which are much less labor/water intensive. This frees up the men to work in other areas outside the village to make more money for the families/community. Another crop also being cultivated is peanuts. In this village, there are 60 families being served by these programs and by the future community center. There has been a delay for building the community center because of the need for additional funds to build it. The cost of building is quickly rising here all the time, so they must raise extra funds to have enough. While I was there, they raised money from a community president who came and committed some funds. They were also seeking to ask the villagers themselves to contribute towards the building. In the end, I decided to donate the remainder myself to make sure it gets finished. All the village women involved in this community center project are also involved in the women's clubs/groups.

"The other village we visited was Kodur, where the community center will support 100 families. For perspective, all the Village Action projects total support about 100,000 people in about 55 villages, though Bhavana may be able to clarify this more, if it is accurate or not. The village of Kodur is a caste village, which means there are different sections of the town divided by caste, from the more wealthy to the middle ranges, then to the poor. As we drove through the village, one could slowly see the homes becoming more and more impoverished (though even the "wealthy" areas did not seem very wealthy in all honesty).

"The community center for this village was being located in the poor section, lower caste area. This center will be located near an adult education building/school, which was simply a very small rectangle-shaped building. Again, the purpose of this center will be for the women's clubs/groups that Village Action set up to meet and discuss the various issues that arise for the community, and also hold workshops and other learning opportunities - financial, social,

educational, etc. This village is also moving away from rice (though it is still present), for the cashew trees. The women of this village are also involved in a short term government scheme/project to dig a large reservoir pond for water collection for the community, which is vitally in need. There are 85 women involved in this project, which we witnessed while meeting also one of the local leaders who pledged extra funds for the community center here, which also needs more finances to be complete. Both village centers should be started within a couple weeks, hopefully (but in India, that could mean a month or two . . . or three).

"It was very interesting to visit these villages, and the people were very nice and hospitable (they kept forcing coconut juice on me!). These villages are definitely poor and in need of support like this from Village Action and the funds from WDI. They could also use a lot more, of course. But we do what we can do. If you have any questions, feel free to ask. I am hoping very soon that the young girl who was with us, and who took digital photos, will email me some. If this ends up happening, I will send them to you (we'll see!). Take care.

Love and Light,  
Noel"